

# **INVASIVE MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE**

## **FACT SHEET**

**WHAT IS INVASIVE MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE?** Invasive meningococcal disease is a severe bacterial infection. It can occur in the bloodstream or in the fluid and lining of the spinal cord or brain. It is a relatively rare disease and usually occurs as a single isolated event. Infants, teenagers, and people over 60 years are more likely to become infected.

**WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?** High fever, severe headache, and stiff neck, are the most common symptoms in people over the age of 2 years. These symptoms develop rapidly, usually over a few hours. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, confusion, and sleepiness.

**WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?** If you or a loved one have these symptoms, it is important to see a doctor as soon as possible. Do not attempt to treat this disease by yourself. The doctor will perform tests to see what is causing your illness, and will then give you the correct medicine. Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics.

**HOW IS IT SPREAD?** Invasive meningococcal disease is spread through close contact such as living in the same house, or very close contact including sharing cigarettes, utensils, or water bottles, kissing, etc.

The bacteria are very weak and can only survive for a short time outside the body—so they cannot live long in the air and are not carried on clothes, furniture, or other surfaces... It is not spread to casual friends, such as people who take the same classes or pass them in the hallway.

The health department will contact you if you are at risk. You should receive antibiotics to protect you from getting the disease.

**CAN I PREVENT IT?** There is a vaccine that can protect you from the most common strains of this disease. The vaccine is recommended for all 11-12 year olds during their pre-adolescent checkup. Also, travelers to some countries and college freshmen may wish to consider getting this vaccine. Talk to your doctor to see if this vaccine is right for you.